

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 203366
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TOKYO FOR HOLBROOKE

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SUOJ: HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PHILIPPINES - NEW YORK TIMES
EDITORIAL

THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL TITLED "PROMISES, PROMISES IN
MANILA" APPEARED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES ON AUGUST 25:

QUOTE A YEAR AGO, JUST BEFORE BANKERS AND OFFICIALS OF
131 COUNTRIES GATHERED IN MANILA FOR THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE
OF THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND, PRESIDENT MARCOS
ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR THE ELECTION OF A PHILIPPINE NATIONAL
LEGISLATURE BY MARCH 1977. THAT ELECTION IS STILL AWAITED,
AS ONE-MAN RULE UNDER MARTIAL LAW APPROACHES ITS FIFTH
ANNIVERSARY. BUT NOW MR. MARCOS HAS OFFERED A NEW
PROMISE--AN ELECTED ASSEMBLY FOR 1978--THIS TIME JUST AS
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PAGE 02 STATE 203366

LAWYERS AND JUDGES FROM MORE THAN 100 COUNTRIES ASSEMBLED
FOR THE EIGHTH WORLD PEACE THROUGH LAW CONFERENCE.

QUOTE THE PROJECTED ELECTION, EVEN IF HELD, OFFERS LITTLE
HOPE OF RESTORING THE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT TERMINATED
BY MR. MARCOS'S PALACE COUP IN 1972. WITH HIS CONTROL
OF THE PRESS, POLICE, MILITARY AND LOCAL OFFICIALS, HE

UNDOUBTEDLY COULD HAND-PICK THE PROSPECTIVE ASSEMBLY. IN ANY EVENT, ONE OF THE NINE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS ADOPTED BY A "FREE" REFERENDUM VOTE OF 90 PERCENT LAST OCTOBER WOULD ENABLE HIM TO CONTINUE TO ISSUE HIS OWN LAWS WHENEVER THE PROSPECTIVE LEGISLATURE FAILS OR IS UNABLE TO ACT ADEQUATELY ON ANY MATTER FOR ANY REASON THAT IN HIS JUDGMENT REQUIRES IMMEDIATE ACTION.

QUOTE MR. MARCOS'S PERFORMANCE INCLUDES THE ARREST OF 60,000 PEOPLE, SEVERAL THOUSANDS OF THEM STILL IN JAIL, AND EVIDENCE OF TORTURE. FOR AMERICANS, THERE IS A SPECIAL POIGNANCY IN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL LIBERTIES FILIPINOS INHERITED FROM DECADES OF UNITED STATES RULE. THE GRANT OF COMMONWEALTH STATUS IN 1936, WITH A PLEDGE OF INDEPENDENCE A DECADE LATER, LED THE FILIPINOS, ALONE AMONG ASIA'S COLONIAL PEOPLES, TO RESIST JAPANESE OCCUPATION VIGOROUSLY IN WORLD WAR II. THEIR LIBERATION WAS FOLLOWED BY A QUARTER-CENTURY OF SELF-RULE UNDER AN AMERICAN-TYPE CONSTITUTION--BROUGHT TO AN END BY MR. MARCOS. FORMER UNITED STATES ATTORNEY GENERAL RAMSEY CLARK CHOSE THE RIGHT WORD WHEN HE SAID IT WAS "HEARTBREAKING" TO HAVE A WORLD LAW CONFERENCE MEET IN MANILA. HIS PROTEST AND DEPARTURE FROM MANILA BEFORE THE MEETING DRAMATIZED A PROBLEM THAT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, WITH ITS CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, CANNOT IGNORE.

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PAGE 03 STATE 203366

QUOTE PRESIDENT MARCOS HAS BEEN SEEKING, SINCE THE FALL OF SAIGON IN 1975, TO OBTAIN GREATER CONTROL OVER THE VALUABLE AMERICAN NAVAL AND AIR BASES IN THE PHILIPPINES, PLUS A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT OF INCREASED MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID. THE IMPORTANCE OF THOSE BASES, THE TWO BIGGEST THE UNITED STATES NOW POSSESSES OVERSEAS, HAS BEEN INCREASED BY PRESIDENT CARTER'S DECISION TO WITHDRAW SUBSTANTIALLY FROM SOUTH KOREA AND THE ASIAN CONTINENT.

QUOTE BUT THE RELATIONSHIP RUNS TWO WAYS. THE BASES AND THE AMERICAN MILITARY GUARANTEE THEY CONFIRM ARE CRUCIAL TO PHILIPPINE SECURITY. ECONOMICALLY, THE PHILIPPINES ARE HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON AMERICAN AID AND TRADE, NOTABLY OUR PURCHASES OF PHILIPPINE SUGAR. SO AMERICAN EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT, CIVIL LIBERTIES AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THIS NATION OF 43 MILLION WOULD NOT BE A UTOPIAN GESTURE. THE UNITED STATES HAS BARGAINING LEVERAGE WITH MR. MARCOS. IT OUGHT TO USE IT. END QUOTE

CHRISTOPHER

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